

**Child Services Oversight Committee 2014-15 Annual Report
Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana**

The top priority of the Child Services Oversight Committee is to support the well-being of Hoosier children by strengthening the Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS). In the past, DCS has been questioned for lacking transparency and open communication concerning potential threats to children. Over the last year, the DCS Oversight Committee addressed these issues to increase transparency while also quickly responding to child abuse reports. Alfreda Singleton-Smith, Director of the Ombudsman Bureau, presented the Ombudsman's mission to effectively respond to complains concerning DCS actions by providing problem resolution services and independent case reviews and to provide recommendations to improve DCS service delivery. The DCS Ombudsman may also examine policies and provides to evaluate the effectiveness of the child protection system.

Doris Tolliver, DCS Chief of Staff, also provided insight regarding the staffing and hiring process of DCS. Although there is still room for improvement, there have been numerous steps taken to increase the quality of service. The requirements for DCS caseworkers now ensure they are trained family case managers with college degrees. The education requirement was added to help provide individuals with the necessary knowledge to handle cases accurately and efficiently. Lawmakers also expanded the DCS Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline to include five additional call centers and many more caseworkers throughout the state (Marion, Saint Joseph, Blackford, Lawrence and Vanderburgh counties). The increase of caseworkers has caused the phone wait times to significantly decrease. Also, the DCS hotline no longer requires callers to provide their names or contact information to encourage people to notice and report child abuse cases.

DCS intends to add new positions, which will require expanding current staff training in both capacity and programming. The addition of staff to local offices will require a statewide discussion on space needs, as many offices are at or nearing maximum capacity even with reconfiguration efforts being made to accommodate previous staffing increases. During our three meetings additional agenda topics included: an Overview of Indiana Court Appointed Special Advocate Program, discussion of DCS child abuse prevention and reporting, a review of each DCS Quarterly Data Report, a DCS Hotline Screening Process, an overview of the Adoption Study Committee, discussion about the State Adoption Subsidy Issue, removal of status offenders from the delinquency code, and finally a discussion of family case manager turnover by Judge Burnham. Our current action plan includes the continued pursuit of strengthening Hoosier children through transparency and quick response to child abuse reports. The topics we plan to review by June 2016 include:

- Changing the role of probation consultants from approving placements to (1) resource consultants, (2) JDAI assistance and (3) educational purposes.
- The issue of CHINS cases showing up as Delinquency cases.

- Salary increases for DCS attorneys have helped in some areas of the state, but not all.
- There is still a high turnover rate among DCS case managers. Would informing CASA/GAL of the DCS case manager assignment or new assignment approve attrition?
- The root cause(s) of DCS case manager turnover must be determined and addressed. Some causes may be relationships with supervisors. DCS must do more to retain case managers.
- Judicial officers agree there has been an increase of CHINS cases statewide, what is the reasoning behind this? How can it be resolved?
- Should “status offenders” (i.e. runaway, incorrigible, chronic truants, curfew violators) be removed from the Delinquency code, and move them in the CHINS code?
- The Commission seeks to get an overview of the Outcome Measures Project, IARCA

In January 2015, DCS contracted with Deloitte Consulting to conduct a field workload analysis. DCS implemented a targeted effort to enhance the new worker training curriculum to provide better direct experience and mentoring support for incoming family case managers. The DCS Oversight Committee intends to monitor Deloitte’s recommendations and the implementation plan of DCS over the next year. The DCS Oversight Committee also recommends the Commission look into expanding the definition of “child trafficking” by not criminalizing those victims, who are 18 and over, as prostitutes.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Senator Carlin Yoder, Chair
Child Services Oversight Committee